



Bike Maintenance Tips

With all of this amazing warm weather lately, we're sure you're ready to break out your bike and go for a ride. But is your bike ready? Here are a few helpful tips to get your bike in tip top shape before you hit the trails!

- A clean bike is a happy bike – Start by wiping the whole bike down with a damp cloth, using a mild soap if necessary. This helps prevent corrosion, and gives it that sparkly shine in the process
- Now that your bike is clean, give it a thorough once-over. Look for any signs of cracks in the frame and rips or excessive wear on the tires, as well as any bent or warped parts. If you notice anything significant, bring your bike into your local bike shop for a diagnosis.
- If there aren't any red flags, bring your focus back to the tires. Odds are they have lost a bit of tire pressure over the winter, so you'll want to make sure to fill them back to their recommended PSI level. Riding on low tires wears them out much faster, and makes for a harder, bumpier ride.
- While you're down at tire level, take a look at your brakes. Many brakes have an "indicator line" which marks the maximum amount of wear before it is recommended to replace your pads. If you don't see a line, grab some change. A general rule of thumb is that if your brakes are as thick as a nickel, you're in the clear. But if they're thinner than a dime, it's time to get them replaced.
- Don't stand up yet. It's time to check your chain. Typical chains are designed to last roughly 2,000 miles. If you think you might be getting close that mark, check the chain for any signs of stress, such as stretching. 12 standard chain links should measure 12 inches in length. If yours is longer, it's time to get a new one. Bad chains can make for difficult shifting and increases the amount of wear and tear on your gears. If your chain is still healthy, give it a cleaning by soaking a rag in degreaser, then running it over the chain to get the nasty grime off.
- Next up is lube, lube, lube. Lubricant is your bike's best friend (other than you of course), and keeps it running smoothly. The two key areas to focus on with lube are your chain, and your seat. Yes, your seat. The seat post to be more specific. Mark your current seat height with a piece of tape, then remove the seat and apply the recommended type of grease to the seat post below that line and then replace the seat. For your chain, apply an even coat of chain lubricant on the inside and outside of each link. Be sure to wipe off any excess lube, as this attracts dirt while you ride, leading to more wear on your chain.
- Lastly, give the bike a "dry run," making sure brake cables are functioning properly and your gear shifting is smooth. If there are any skips or jerks while shifting, can be due to an issue with your chain rings, cables or even your derailleur. Be sure to bring the bike into your favorite bike shop if this occurs to prevent any further damage.

Now you (and your bike) are ready to get out there and ride! Not sure where to go? Check out our [interactive bike map](#) to find the best routes to where you are trying to go. Don't forget to wear your helmet!

This commute tip is provided by 36 Commuting Solutions, a nonprofit organization with the mission to enhance the mobility of U.S. 36 for today and the future. Send your commute success stories, questions, and comments to info@36commutingsolutions.org.